

**OPPORTUNITY FINANCE NETWORK HONORS SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ WITH  
CONGRESSIONAL CHAMPION AWARD**

*Advocate for Economic Development in Distressed Communities Lauded for Unwavering Efforts*

**PHILADELPHIA, May 22, 2013**—**Opportunity Finance Network** (OFN), the leading national network of performance-oriented, responsible community development financial institutions (CDFIs), announced today that **Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) received its Congressional Champion Award**. Menendez has championed policies that have expanded the capacity of the CDFI industry to foster economic development and job creation in distressed communities across the nation.

Since his election to the Senate, Menendez has led efforts to increase CDFI Fund appropriations by organizing colleagues to communicate with Appropriations Committee leaders. In addition, he is the author of the CDFI Bond Guarantee Program, the most potentially transformative federal initiative benefiting the CDFI industry since the creation of the CDFI Fund in 1994.

CDFIs are private financial institutions that are dedicated to delivering responsible, affordable lending to help low-income, low-wealth, and other disadvantaged people and communities join the economic mainstream.

“The CDFI Bond Guarantee Program would never have become law without Sen. Robert Menendez’ steadfast pursuit of securing long-term, affordable capital for CDFIs for U.S. economic development,” said Mark Pinsky, President and CEO of OFN. “We thank him for being the Congressional Champion for CDFIs and the low-income, low-wealth, and other distressed people and communities we serve.”

**The Congressional Champion Award** recognizes federal legislators who have demonstrated leadership in supporting opportunity finance and recognizing CDFIs as a sound investment of federal resources. The last recipient in 2008 was Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.), a senior member of the Senate Banking Committee, who was honored for his pioneering contributions to affordable housing and economic development in underserved communities and for developing and promoting the Capital Magnet Fund.

“If we are really serious about increasing economic opportunity and revitalizing our most distressed communities, we must expand access to capital in these communities. That’s why I’ve worked so hard during my career to expand the reach of Community Development Financial Institutions and why I’m so pleased to receive this award,” Menedez said.

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**About Opportunity Finance Network (OFN):** OFN, the leading network of private financial institutions, creates growth that is good for communities, investors, individuals, and the economy. Members of OFN are community development financial institutions (CDFIs) that deliver responsible lending to help low-wealth and low-income communities join the economic mainstream. Through 2011, OFN’s Network originated more than \$30 billion in financing in urban, rural, and Native communities, and financed 940,000 housing units, 83,000 business and microenterprises, 9,000 community facilities. More information is available at: [www.opportunityfinance.net](http://www.opportunityfinance.net)

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